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SIPDIS

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TAGS: KCRM CASC PINS SNAR ASEC PTER PGOV MX

SUBJECT: CARTELS CONFRONTING MEXICAN LAW ENFORCEMENT IN NUEVO LEON AND COAHUILA

REF: A) MONTERREY 213, B) MONTERREY 251

CLASSIFIED BY: Bruce Williamson, Consul General, Monterrey, State.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶11. (SBU) Summary. Drug cartel members staged an open shootout with federal police officers in the Monterrey suburb of Guadalupe on July 14 resulting in six deaths. The Mexican military's round-up of 20 San Pedro police officers (including a commander in the city's command and control center) and the kidnapping of a military general serving as the police chief of Piedras Negras caps off an unusually violent week in Northern Mexico. We expect further violent episodes as the cartels test the waters in the wake of the July 5 elections, and the military continues to pursue the traffickers and corrupt elements within state/local law enforcement. End Summary.

¶12. (C) A botched kidnapping on July 14 in Guadalupe, one of Monterrey's populous suburbs, turned into an unprecedented shootout between federal police officers and Zeta cartel members. During the course of the confrontation, four assailants were killed as well as the two individuals that were the target of the kidnapping. Another assailant along with one police officer and two civilians were injured. According to press reports, the police officers thought they were responding to a standard kidnapping call but were surprised when the perpetrators called for backup. The kidnappers' reinforcements arrived in an armored vehicle with a large caliber automatic weapon and fragmentation grenades. Direct firefights with cartels are rare in the Monterrey area even though the cartels have a large presence in the state. Law enforcement officials have opined that the success of recent military actions have caused younger, less experienced, and more violent plaza bosses to assume command of the local drug trade as older leaders are incarcerated or killed.

¶13. (C) Adding to the perception of insecurity was the July 13 and 14 arrests of 20 San Pedro police officers believed to be on the payroll of the Beltran Leyva Cartel. Military personnel detained the 20 police officers in an action similar to the arrests of 85 other officers in the Monterrey area in the last two months (Reftel A). The arrests come two weeks after a payoff list was found during the capture of Omar 'El 34' Ibarra Lozano, the local plaza boss. According to police sources, there were 33 names on the list so further arrests are expected. San Pedro is the wealthiest municipality in Mexico - the home to many entrepreneurs and industrialists - so there had been some hope that the city's police officers would not be the subject of arrests as was the case with other police agencies in the metro area.

¶14. (C) One of those arrested included a police commander in the C4 (the city's police command and control center) which had

been touted by San Pedro leaders as a 'silver bullet' in the fight against organized crime. The police commander is believed to have provided drug trafficking organizations advance knowledge of law enforcement operations, intelligence and information on police personnel. The weakness in the C4 system has always been the operators behind the screens. Despite the police's safeguards, the cartels have found ways to corrupt the C4's employees. Indeed, in the wake of the July 5 elections the San Pedro Public Security Secretary - a trusted post contact - had sought out Consulate leadership in an effort to find a secure home outside the country once he leaves office. We have received similar inquiries from other law enforcement interlocutors in other states.

¶5. (C) Meanwhile, in the town of Piedras Negras, Coahuila, drug cartels are attempting to thwart the militarization of local police forces. Rogelio Ramos was a military general sent to be the police chief to replace a military colonel, Arturo Navarro, who was assassinated in April (reftel B). In June, Post's law enforcement team had met with Ramos and other military officers seconded to Coahuila state and local public security forces. However, on July 13 Ramos was kidnapped. It is unknown who the governor and the military will send to replace Ramos.

¶6. (C) Comment. These recent events in Coahuila and Nuevo Leon have shown a growing willingness by cartels to violently confront Mexican law enforcement officials. Both states are part of a larger nationwide trend of increasing violence as a result of President Calderon using the military to press the cartels. End Comment.

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